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Real estate roundup: Peter Mitham

Zalm's Fantasy Gardens property sold again

Richmond's Townline Group to seek community input on the future of the 22-acre theme park property formerly owned by ex-premier

Townline snares gardens

Townline Group of Richmond has bought Fantasy Gardens, the 22-acre theme park that has languished on Steveston Highway at No. 5 Road in Richmond for more than a decade.

Townline plans to launch a community consultation regarding the future of the site in April. Rick Ilich, president of Townline, expects the site will host a mix of uses consistent with the current zoning and reflect sustainable development principles. The current vision for the site includes a classic mix of uses, including residential and commercial, but the public consultation will determine the exact ratios.

The property is significant, given a location that effectively makes it the gateway to Richmond for anyone approaching from the south.

In addition, half the property is within the province's agricultural land reserve, with zoning that permits botanical gardens (one of the features of the theme park when it was owned by former B.C. premier and nursery operator Bill Vander Zalm). Townline isn't planning to seek exclusion of the agricultural portion. It will incorporate it within the redevelopment.

Terms of Townline's purchase, which closed in December, were not disclosed.

The former owner of Fantasy Gardens, Asiaworld (Canada) Development Corp., bought the property from Vander Zalm in 1990. Asiaworld planned a 15-storey hotel and country club for the site, but those plans never came to fruition.